

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee

February 16, 2016

Chandler J. Howard

President and CEO

Liberty Bank

315 Main Street

Middletown, CT 06457

In Support of the Parents' Trust Fund

I am writing to respectfully ask you to restore the funding to the Parents' Trust Fund and that was eliminated in the Governor's budget.

As you know, the Parents' Trust Fund supports parent leadership and empowerment programs such as the nationally recognized Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parent SEE), and People Empowering People (PEP). These programs have a proven track record of success in educating and inspiring parents to become better advocates for their children and leaders within their communities. They are life-changing—not just for the parents, or their children, but for the greater community around them.

The relatively small investment that the state makes in the Parents' Trust Fund leverages private funding from a variety of sources. ***These include our Liberty Bank Foundation, which has provided \$196,500 in grants to PLTI and its sister programs over the past 16 years.*** Private philanthropy can and will supplement the Parent Trust Fund, but it simply does not have the capacity to fund these programs without state support.

Liberty's support for these parent engagement programs goes beyond our grant dollars. When the Parent Trust Fund was last defunded in 2009, many local PLTI, PEP, and Parent SEE programs shut down for lack of funding. When funding was restored in 2011, our foundation staff worked hand in hand with the Connecticut Commission on Children to restart these programs, and to propagate them in new communities. We are proud to have been involved with restarts in Middletown, Norwich, New London, and Willimantic, and with the launch of these programs in Wallingford, Mansfield, and West Hartford. We also provide support to ongoing programs in Meriden, Bristol, New Haven, and Plainville. All this has required a significant investment in staff time for our foundation, but we regard the empowerment of parents as one of the best investments we can make in our communities.

To ensure that each of these programs continues to have centralized administration, training, and quality control, we have provided grants to the three agencies providing that provide this support: the Commission on Children (PLTI), the Connecticut Center for School Change (Parent SEE), and the University of Connecticut Extension Service (PEP).

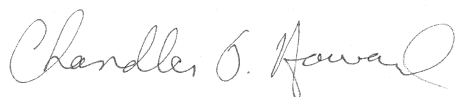
As a banker, I'm used to thinking about investments in terms of risks and returns. From a business point of view, investing in parents and children generates returns economically, as well as from a human standpoint. Children whose parents are engaged in their education earn better grades; have better school attendance; are more likely to graduate from high school and more likely to go on to higher education. That's important to the business community, because it means more young people will enter the workforce with the skills and knowledge that employers need. Those young people are vital to the success of our business sector and to the future of the state as a whole.

On the other hand, if we fail to invest in parents and children, we will pay in other ways. We'll pay for remediation programs for children who fall behind in school because they don't have the parental support they need to succeed. We'll pay criminal justice costs for children who get in trouble because they don't have the right kind of guidance from Mom and Dad. And we'll pay in terms of lost jobs when businesses leave our state because our labor force contains too many young people who are not ready to work.

The bottom line is that we can pay for parent leadership programs, which we know are effective at building better lives for families—OR we can pay to repair the damage. The latter course will cost much more in both dollars and human suffering.

I know that our state is facing tough choices today. Cuts will have to be made. But let's make them where they will do the least damage to the most vulnerable among us—***and where the savings realized won't cost us more money elsewhere.*** Please make the right choice for Connecticut families: restore funding for the Parent Trust Fund, and keep these successful programs alive.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, and for your service to our state.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chandler J. Howard". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Chandler J. Howard
President and CEO
Liberty Bank